THE NEW
INDIAN EXPRESS

BENGALURU • THURSDAY • SEPTEMBER 21, 2023 • ₹9.00 • PAGES 24 • LATE CITY EDITION

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SC TO HEAR CHALLENGE TO QUOTA BEYOND 10-YR CAP FOR SC/STs IN LS

The SC will hear pleas questioning constitutional validity of extending reservation beyond the 10 years to SCs and STs in Lok Sabha and assemblies

FIVE-JUDGE BENCH TO HEAR FROM NOVEMBER 21

A five-judge Constitution bench set November 21 to start hearing the plea. The validity of the 104th amendment of the Constitution in 2019 shall be determined to the extent that it applies to the SCs and STs. The amendment had extended the SC/ST quota by 10 years and specified 2030 as the end-year for the provision of reservation. The Centre defended its decision

RIGHT TO CHOICE, EQUALITY VIOLATED: PLEA

- The bench comprises Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud and justices A S Bopanna, M M Sundresh, J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra
- The petitioner argued that grant of relentless and repeated extension to certain communities resulted in depriving the electorate of their right to choice in candidates and was violative of the right to equality

Art 334

SCOPE OF AMENDMENT TO EXTEND QUOTA END-DATE UNDER STATUTE TEST

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

Union home minister Amit Shah (L) and Congress leader Sonia Gandhi participating in the debate on the Women's Reservation Bill in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday | PTI

454 ayes. 2 nays. Women's bill gets LS stamp. RS debate today

60 members of the Lok Sabha participate in eight-hour-long debate, 27 of them women

PREETHA NAIR @ New Delhi

THE Lok Sabha on Wednesday made history by passing the Women's Reservation Bill by an overwhelming majority of 454 votes. Only two MPs voted against the bill that seeks to reserve one-third of seats for women in Parliament and all state assemblies.

While supporting the bill, the Opposition made a strong pitch for extending the quota to the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and the immediate implementation of the legislation in the upcoming 2024 elections. Prime Minister Narendra Modi was present during voting.

"The proposal has been passed with more than two-thirds majority of the members present in the House," announced Speaker Om Birla after the vote. The bill will now go to the Rajya Sabha. Also, at least half of state assemblies have to ratify it to become law.

The bill will come into force only after the delimitation exercise which will be preceded by the decadal Census.

Several women Parliamentarians participated in the eight-hour-long debate, which saw spirited exchanges from both camps. Initiating the debate, Congress leader Sonia Gandhi made a strong pitch for caste census and bringing OBC women in the ambit of the law. She also urged the government to implement the quota immediately as any delay would be "gross injustice" to women.

Dispelling the concerns of the Opposition, Union home minister Amit Shah said the next government will conduct the Census and the delimitation exercise immediately after the elections and set in motion the process of reservation.

Hinting that the bill will become a reality after 2029, Shah asserted that the BJP has given more representation to the OBCs than those claiming to speak for them. "Nearly 29% or 85 BJP MPs, 29 Union ministers, and 365 of its 1,358 MLAs, which is over 27%, are from the OBC category," Shah said.

Several Opposition leaders including DMK's Kanimozhi, TMC's Mahua Moitra, NCP's Supriya Sule and others demanded the immediate rollout of the reservation. While Supriya Sule termed the legislation a "post-dated cheque", Akali Dal's Harsimrat Badal targeted the BJP over its leaders being booked for crimes against women.

On the demand for immediate implementation, Shah said it could lead to allegations of partiality. He said that the matter was best left to the delimitation commission, which would carry out the exercise with transparency. Shah said the delimitation panel was an appropriate forum as it would be chaired by a retired Supreme Court judge and have representation from political parties.

AIMIM leader Asaduddin Owaisi was the lone MP who spoke against the bill saying it would provide quota only to "upper caste women" and exclude OBC and Muslims who have little representation in Parliament. AIMIM has two members in the Lok Sabha.

It's a big step. It's not a small step... There is one thing in my view that makes this bill incomplete. I would like to have seen the OBC reservation included in this bill

Rahul Gandhi, Congress leader

For the first time, it has been acknowledged in the House that it was not one particular family that got the bill for reservation for women in local bodies, but the government of Narasimha Rao

Smriti Irani, Union minister

Indians not safe in Canada, hate crimes up, says MEA

YESHI SELI @ New Delhi

STEPPING up its diplomatic offensive against Canada, India on Wednesday issued an advisory for its citizens living in Canada and those planning to travel there "to exercise utmost caution". The strongly worded communique came a day after India expelled a senior Canadian diplomat in a tit-for-tat move and rubbished Canada's prime minister Justin Trudeau's charge that Indian agents killed Canada-based Khalistani terrorist Hardeep Singh Nijjar.

"In view of growing anti-India activities and politically condoned hate crimes and criminal violence in Canada, all Indian nationals there and those contemplating travel are urged to exercise utmost caution," read a statement by the Ministry of External Affairs.

The advisory cautioned that there has been a significant rise in threats targeting Indian diplomats as well as the Indian community. "Indian nationals are therefore advised to avoid travelling to regions and potential venues in Canada that have seen such incidents," the statement said, asking Indian workers and students to register with the High Commission of India in Ottawa or the Consulate General of India in Toronto and Vancouver.

The diplomatic row, however, will not affect the military ties between the two countries. Canada's Deputy Army Chief Major General Peter Scott is scheduled to attend a defence conclave in Delhi next week. Explaining the need to treat political stand-offs in isolation, Major General Abhinaya Rai, additional director general, strategic planning, pointed out that India still engages with China despite differences.

Reacting cautiously to the India-Canada face-off, US Ambassador to India Eric Garcetti said both countries are close friends of the US. "Canada is an ally, a dear friend, trading partner and happens to share our border. Moments like this don't define our relationship but slow down the progress," he said in New Delhi.

Security beefed up around the High Commission of Canada, New Delhi | PARVEEN NEGI

KHALISTAN GROUPS TARGET INDIAN MISSIONS

Pro-Khalistan groups will stage protests outside Indian diplomatic missions in Canada on September 25. According to sources, the radicals may target the Indian flag and diplomats. They may also attack Indian nationals, accusing them of being RAW agents

MAJOR MOVE

Audit to clear encroachments around B'luru

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

IN a major move to recover government lands from land-grabbers in and around Bengaluru, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has instructed the Principal Secretary, Revenue Department, to conduct an audit of lands as resorts have come up on 75,000 acres of encroached land and private guesthouses on around 6,000 acres.

The CM's instruction comes after former MLC and KPCC spokesperson Ramesh Babu wrote to him in this regard on September 19.

Babu submitted some documents related to the alleged encroachment of government land within a radius of 100 km from Bengaluru city.

"We are aware of the rise in the prices of revenue land, especially in and around Bengaluru. Some people are encroaching upon government lands and getting title deeds for the same by creating and producing fake documents. The reports of the House Committee headed by former MLA AT Ramaswamy and V Balasubramananyan committee had mentioned many cases of land grabbing," Babu stated in his letter.

More than 1,000 resorts and homestays have come up in and around Bengaluru city. "If the government clears the encroachment after an audit and disposes of such lands through auction, it will earn crores of rupees as revenue," he stated in his letter.

Will approach SC for stay on CWMA order on water release, says Siddu

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

Chief Minister Siddaramiah and Deputy CM DK Shivakumar at a meeting with all-party MPs on the Cauery issue in New Delhi on Wednesday | EXPRESS

CHIEF Minister Siddaramaiah and his deputy DK Shivakumar on Wednesday held a meeting with all-party MPs, including ministers from the State, in New Delhi on releasing Cauvery water to Tamil Nadu.

After the meeting, Siddaramaiah told reporters that they sought the Prime Minister's intervention as he has the prerogative to summon representatives from both states to discuss the issue. "In the meantime, we will approach the Supreme Court to stay the CWMA's order to release water to TN," the CM said.

"It is not an issue of not releasing water. In fact, we have no sufficient water in our dams. To protect the Kannada land, water, language and culture, we should set aside party politics and stand united. We need 33 tmcft of water for drinking purpose, 70 tmcft to protect the standing crops, and 3 tmcft for use by industries. In all, the State needs 106 tmcft of water. But we have only 53 tmcft of water in our dams," Siddaramaiah said.

He said Karnataka did not receive good rainfall after August, whereas Tamil Nadu received it even after August. "So, we are facing more trouble. This situation has been ably argued before CWMA by our legal team, experts and officials," he added.

According to the Supreme Court order, the state has to release 108.4 tmcft of water to TN. It could release only 39.8 tmcft due to distress. In the absence of a distress formula, the dispute between the two states continues.

CONTINUED ON: P6

BBP REPORT WARNS OF VIRUS OUTBREAK IN FORESTS

BOSKY KHANNA @ Bengaluru

THE death of seven leopard cubs in Bannerghatta Biological Park (BBP) due to Feline Panleukopenia Virus (FPV) has become a cause for concern among veterinarians and experts. They now fear that the virus may infect domestic and wildcats.

Officials of the Park on Wednesday submitted a report to the Zoo Authority of Karnataka (ZAK) and to the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) explaining the reasons for the death of cubs and the action taken by them.

BBP Executive Director AV Surya Sen said that they submitted a detailed report to the Central Zoo Authority of India, ZAK, and to the PCCF to initiate action.

A veterinarian with ZAK said, "It is a matter of concern. There is an outbreak of FPV. There are many instances of death of wildcats in zoos across India. We have spoken to our counterparts in other states and have learnt about it. We have information on deaths of domestic cats. So, we request pet owners to keep a thorough health record of their pets."

The cubs are vulnerable as their immune system is weak. However, its occurrence in adults cannot be ruled out. Thus, directions have been issued for a thorough health check up of all the felines

— ZAK official

The ZAK official said the cubs are vulnerable as their immune system is weak. However, its occurrence in adults cannot be ruled out. Thus, directions have been issued for a thorough health check up of all the felines. The viral infection has also become a cause for concern among forest officials.

A senior official said the death of tiger cubs in TN could be because of this virus. Only a postmortem will confirm the reasons. Subhash Malkhade, PCCF, Wildlife, said he will study the report. "The situation is under control now in BBP," he added.

Sewage enters houses at Yelachenahalli ward in Bengaluru | EXPRESS

BWSSB messes up drain, sewage floods houses

MOHAMMED YACOOB @ Bengaluru

WHENEVER it rains, sewage enters at least a dozen houses at Ramakrishna Nagar and Elliyas Nagar (Yelachenahalli ward) in South Bengaluru.

The alleged negligence on the part of Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) is the reason for this.

Repeated complaints to BWSSB from residents and social activists have gone in vain. The reason for this problem is the BWSSB has not completed the sewage link line work connecting Gangadhar Nagar and Yelachenahalli. Because of this, sewage enters the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) stormwater drain which is only 1.5 metres wide. The BWSSB has to lay 40 metres of sewage pipeline to complete the link line.

The incomplete sewage line and the line not being extended further to connect a sub-sewage line at Yelachenahalli allows sewage to flow into the stormwater drain. When it rains, sewage from the SWD overflows and runs down, flooding homes that are in low-lying areas.

BBMP Executive Engineer (SWD) Sri Lakshmi confirmed sewage entering the 1.5-metre drain near Gangadhar Nagar. "As we have taken up work on the 40-foot road at Fayazabad, the left side of the road is for the BWSSB to lay the sewage line. Our stormwater drain network is part of CM's Nagarothana grant of Rs 3 crore earmarked in 2022. If the stormwater drain network is free from sewage, the flooding of homes can be avoided," she said.

P4

OMG! Zero in NEET-PG entrance no bar for higher edu seat

KAVITA BAJELI DATT @ New Delhi

THE Medical Counselling Committee on Wednesday said it has slashed the qualifying percentile for NEET-PG 2023 to zero across all categories. The decision was taken following a recommendation by the Union health ministry.

So, now all those who appeared for NEET-PG entrance will be eligible to participate in counselling. The Federation of Resident Doctors' Association said a large number of students will now fill up the seats, which otherwise went vacant.

"Over the past years, we have witnessed a persistent challenge in the form of vacant seats in medical institutions across the nation even after multiple rounds of counselling for NEET-PG," according to the Federation of Resident Doctors' Association.

Interview beckons for all from top to bottom rank

A fresh registration process and choice filling for round-three of postgraduate counselling will be reopened for candidates who have become eligible after the reduction of percentile

However, the move ignited fierce debate among the medical associations and practitioners. While some hailed it, others decried it, saying that it will bring down the quality of future doctors.

Earlier, many medical associations had demanded that the cut-off be reduced to accommodate NEET-PG aspirants, as over 8,000 clinical and non-clinical seats in government and non-government colleges were vacant across the country.

Dr Lakshya Mittal of United Doctors Front Association who had petitioned the government on behalf of Persons with Disabilities, who could not participate in the ongoing NEET-PG counselling session due to high cut-off, said it was a "big victory" for NEET aspirants.

FAIMA (Federation of All India Medical Association) Doctors Association chairman Dr Rohan Krishnan said the decision will "kill merit". "This is a very worrying trend," he told this paper.

He said reducing the cut-off to zero is making a mockery of medical education in India and bringing down the healthcare standard in the country. "This will promote corruption and high fees in private medical colleges," he said. Many doctors took to social media to raise objections to the cut-off mark.

Dr Deepak Krishnamurthy, senior interventional cardiologist in Sakra World Hospital, Bengaluru, posted on X (formerly Twitter), "Zero percentile is the new cut-off!. It is high time patients ask their treating doctors about their academic performance and how they got into their MBBS, PG and super specialty."